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A Postgame Interview With:

COACH KIRK FERENTZ

KIRK FERENTZ: Obviously just really pleased with the ballgame today. Our guys really did a good job, played hard. We thought this was a really even game going in, and quite a few breaks and what have you, and our guys did a good job. Happy to get out with a victory, and this was probably our best performance of the season, stating the obvious.

Q. Talk about the opening kickoff.

KIRK FERENTZ: The last couple games we've moved the ball initially and they've been productive. We haven't done a good job after that, so it was good to see us keep pushing forward after that first series ended.

Q. Rudock seemed to play well the whole game.

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, I thought he was right on top of his game, and he made some really nice throws out there, made some nice checks for us, really had a good feel for what they were doing. I don't want to say flawless, but it looked like he played pretty well out there.

Q. How satisfying is it when a game plan kind of comes true like it did today?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, I wish it happened more often. It's been a while since it really looked that way. But that's the biggest thing that happened today. We played good team football; three areas of play really complemented each other. We had a couple things we're going to have to correct and get straightened out, but for the

most part I thought we played good, complementary football, which is important for us.

Q. When you win a game like this, how much do you learn about the team?

KIRK FERENTZ: Well, you know, I don't know how to put it, but you never know where it's going to go, and games like this don't happen a lot, too often. We had some unusual plays that the lead got built right away. But you learn about your team no matter what the situation is, I think, good, bad or indifferent.

I thought today we retained our focus and kept thinking about the right things in the second half. You know, that was good to see.

Q. So much talk about the running game this year, and today is the day it broke loose.

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, it looked better, certainly. We're going to continue to work on it. If we're going to be good, we've to run the ball effectively. Mark gave us good juice there, especially in that first half, and then we were able to get him out in the second half, which was a good thing, and get Akrum some carries. He hasn't really played very much, as you know.

It was a good benefit, too. But we're going to need everybody, and today is a good example. We had a couple guys that couldn't dress, couldn't play, and it was good to get Akrum up and running.

Q. How does it make you feel to see the team respond after the loss to Maryland?

KIRK FERENTZ: I don't know if it's so much effort as it was -- which is part of effort, but your focus and your concentration. To me the story of the Maryland game, our guys were trying hard, but they were missing tackles. You've got to use technique. Effort is one thing; everything starts with effort, but if you don't play with good technique, you're not going to be successful

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playing against conference teams. So the missed tackles, some of the angles we took to the ball are going to get you beat consistently, and then not protecting the football is going to get you beat every time and throw some major penalties in there on top of it. If we think we're going to win games in our league doing that stuff, it doesn't work, so at least today we made some real improvement there, and it's going to be critical for us going down the stretch here, too.

Q. The fullbacks seemed like they were dominating at the point of attack almost every run.

KIRK FERENTZ: You know, it's a little thing but a big thing. We really felt we had good depth and two outstanding fullbacks with Macon and Adam, and that hasn't worked out so far. But to get Macon back, he's a veteran player. What he's doing now is what we envisioned, and I guess what I'm trying to say, it's like with John Kenny -- Macon a year ago is where John Kenny is now. Yeah, that experience really helps. It's a little thing, but it's good to get him back, and John has done a good job, and Chad Gilson also jumped in in the last two weeks and has worked, too. He did a good job, as well.

Every little thing counts, and the run game is all about detail and it's all about execution, so it was good. I think we took a step forward here.

Q. What does Austin bring you at guard, and Tommy at center --

KIRK FERENTZ: It's just Tommy is not -- we don't see him playing guard for us. He's better at center. In our opinion, he's playing as consistently as anybody we've got, so put him in his best spot. Austin has played a lot of guard. So there is flexibility there, and then Sean and Jordan are both playing, too. If anything we're going to gain a little depth out of Jordan's injury from a couple weeks ago. At least we've come out with some depth. Tommy has done a great job.

Q. On the defensive side of the ball you had a lot of sacks today.

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, the big story of the game to me was both lines. I thought they did a good job, and certainly the defensive line came up with some critical stops there and pushing the pocket back there and causing pressure, so that's a good thing. Louis has been doing a great job all along, Drew Ott gives us some juice, Nate and Carl, and Mike Hardy, as well.

Q. (Inaudible.) Do you almost want to say I told you so?

KIRK FERENTZ: No, I'm happy any time any of our players play well. I'm confident if CJ is in there, he'll play well, too. He's a good football player. So we just try to as coaches try to evaluate things as smartly as we can. You're never going to be 100 percent right, and then we try to do what's best for our football team. It's not like -- we like both those guys, but it's really hard to go back and forth at that position.

Q. Talk about Jake Rudock's performance today.

KIRK FERENTZ: I thought he had several really good throws today, a couple of them on those 3rd downs, too, where he zipped it in there. And kudos to our receiver, too. He did a good job of bringing it in. It looked a little bit more like a passing game there.

Q. Was there a point in the bye week where you saw the light come on with this team?

KIRK FERENTZ: No, no, absolutely not. I can't pinpoint a turning point. In fact, our first bye week was really good. We were humming out there, really practicing well, and quite frankly I think all of us were probably moping a little bit a week ago. And that's okay, too. That was probably good for all of us.

But Sunday we turned our sights towards the next game, and sometimes it's good to stew on things for a little bit. That's healthy, too.

Q. The blocked punt, was that just Ben Niemann made a great play.

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, exactly. That wasn't a punt blocked, but we had gotten some pressure, and we do try to get a couple guys in there just to make sure we keep him honest. He's made a great effort on us. We were close I think on the punt before that and the one before that. Just a good effort for him. Good to see young guy like that make a nice play.

Q. Talk a little bit more about Wadley.

KIRK FERENTZ: Akrum is a guy that was probably under-recruited when he got here. He's undersized, obviously. He's a little bit thin right now. Last year he didn't make a huge jump like a

lot of guys in their first year. They really don't know the tempo, they don't know what's required of them. But since he's gotten back up and running a little bit, he's doing a better job. I think he understands now. So the big thing for him, there's a lot of things he can improve on starting with ball security. That's the danger of a new guy out there, just like J.P. a couple weeks ago. But he'll improve and we'll keep working with him on that in practice.

But he's a guy that really loves football. That's been pretty clear since he's been here; he really has a good football mentality. He's got good vision. He's a tough, tough-minded guy, too. It was good to get him up and running a little bit here. It was good to see.

Q. Speaking of tough-minded, Trinca-Pasat played well.

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, we played against a guy in that '05 Capital One Bowl, a guy named Williams from LSU. They had one guy on our right side that was just a total pain, and the Williams guy was just a hard-charging tough guy. That guy is still playing for Buffalo. He's a hell of a player. That's kind of when I think about guys outside of our program, I think about Louis. Louis doesn't get a lot of note, doesn't get a lot of attention, but I'm guessing most opposing coaches know who he is.

And the neat thing about it, a couple years ago 2012, he was getting his brains beat in basically. He was just a first-year guy getting banged around. But he's really done a good job. He's really growing up. He's a great leader, totally invested.

Q. You talked a lot in the off-season about keeping fresh for late in games late in the season. I'm thinking that that part has worked out okay?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, we lucked out today, but if it took another 15 carries in the second half, that's what we could have done. That plan is out the window right now. All this, it's four weeks now, less than four weeks actually.

Q. Is that a better spot than he's been?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, no question about that. Just like you talk about Louis, Mark is that same kind of guy. He's just so invested, so reliable, dependable, and if we're going to have a good year, our best guys got to play their best, and certainly Mark is a big part of that.

Q. You held Justin Jackson under control, defense really rallied to the ball, getting tackles.

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, he still had a lot of yards. He's a good football player, and boy, they always seem to come up with good guys back there, and he's a really good player.

Q. Status on Jordan Canzeri?

KIRK FERENTZ: Probably know more by Tuesday when we meet. Hopefully he will be. There was no sense in dressing him today, he and George Kittle both. We just kept them out. I'm hoping we get him back by Tuesday, but it's just day by day.

Q. Did Parker get injured?

KIRK FERENTZ: He did. Yeah, he got banged on that one play, so hopefully we'll get him back, too.

Q. Opening kickoff was a big play.

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, just things like that are just part of it. They really give you a good deal. He didn't start out so great. I don't know if he does that on purpose to suck you in a little bit, but it's twice I think he's done that, but at least he finds the thing, and I was glad he didn't step out of bounds down there, and then really did something with it. The guys up front are working hard on the blocking, as well.

Q. Is Connor more now your punter?

KIRK FERENTZ: Yeah, it's really close right now, but we'll play it week by week.

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